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## ABSTRACT

This book focuses on the integration of an individual's inner and outer landscape. It contains a series of invitations for young people to look out upon their own landscapes and to write the important themes of their lives. The writing experiences outlined in the book give children (and adults) space to become quiet and focused and to tap into their inner wealth of being. Each chapter of the book, every poem, represents a different door an individual can open to the natural world. The book is grounded in meaningful language-based learning theory, and, as such, is an excellent resource for teaching language arts, enhancing science studies, and advocating ecological awareness. Sections of the book include: (1) Poetry Field Trips; (2) Building a Nature Wordscape; (3) Keeping a Nature Journal; (4) Other Explorations such as, finding a companion in nature, colors in the natural world, dreaming up a place, and growing a poem naturally; (5) Anthology--a sampling of original poems by young authors; and (6) A Note To Educators (Mona Hirschi Daniels). (NKA)

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# A Crow

Doesn't  
Need A  
Shadow

A Guide  
to Writing Poetry  
From Nature

Lorraine Ferra

Illustrations by Diane Boardman

2

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# A Crow Doesn't Need A Shadow

A Guide  
to Writing Poetry  
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CIP

For the children  
who wrote the poems in this book,  
for their imaginative spirit  
and their respect for the earth.

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# Open the Door

## An Invitation to Readers

Over three hundred years ago, the poet Matsuo Bashō said, "To learn about a tree, go to a tree." Bashō was considering more than the scientific facts you learn about trees. He was suggesting that the creatures of the natural world speak a language, one perhaps different from yours, but one you can understand if you listen with your imagination.

The poems in these pages were written by people who know that a river "talks to you in splashy ways," or who can hear rain "reciting prayers against the windowpane." Some have stood under a sky filled with "whispering stars" or in a quiet snowfall that made the night seem "wordless." Others have watched a growing pine tree "becoming the grandfather of the animal-shaped clouds" or supposed that because of its sleek, deep darkness, "a crow doesn't need a shadow."

These writers were learning a new language by giving their full attention to the world around them. Their thoughts and poems grew naturally as they sat under a tree or followed the flight of a bird or a leaf in the wind. Like Bashō, they went out to the source.

Every chapter of this book, every poem, is a different door you can open to the natural world. Choose any one of these doors, open it, and step quietly outside with your pencil, paper, and imagination.

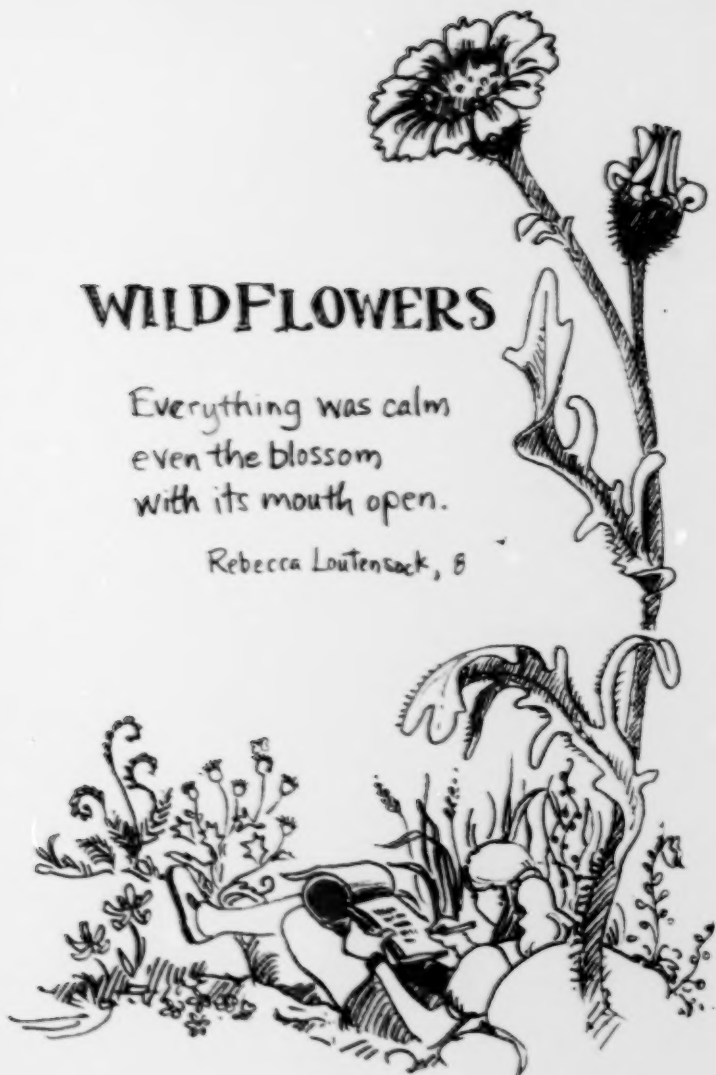
# Poetry Field Trips



# WILDFLOWERS

Everything was calm  
even the blossom  
with its mouth open.

Rebecca Loutensack, 8





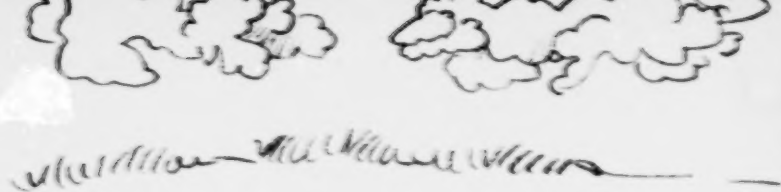
Can you remember a summer day when you were lying on your back in cool grass, watching clouds float overhead? If they seemed more like a flock of sheep grazing in a blue meadow than clouds, you were thinking like a poet, and your thought was a poem. You were imagining like another poet who wrote about tulips

becoming wings  
ears of the wind  
jackrabbits rolling their eyes.

A strange idea? "Weird," you might say. But when you think about it, the common names for certain wildflowers, as "wild" as they sound,

Rosy Pussy Toes      Goats beard  
Prairie Rocket      White Mule Ears

...not only describe their appearance, but also make those flowers memorable. It seems they were named by poets who are always trying to see the "ordinary" things of the earth as the wonders they actually are. You can try the same sort of thing, and what you discover about the earth will be as valuable as finding a new friend.



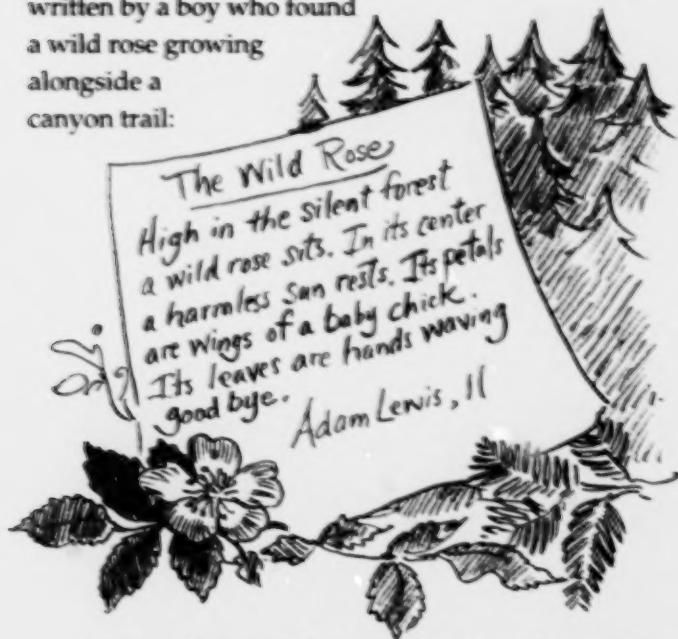
One way to become more familiar with nature is to go on poetry field trips. These are ways of exploring the natural world by observing rocks, plants, or animals, then writing down your thoughts about them in poems.

On your first poetry field trip you might search just for a flower. Look around your yard, neighborhood, or city park. If your family is planning a weekend drive in the countryside or to the mountains, comb the terrain for wildflowers. Besides carrying a notebook and pencil, take along a field guide to help you identify the flowers by name.





Once you have chosen a flower, sit beside it for a while. What does it smell like? Are its leaves and stem smooth or fuzzy? What about its color? Is it bright or dark? Are the petals thick, delicate, velvety? What do the flower's different parts remind you of? Use your answers to these questions to write a short poem describing the flower. Here is an example written by a boy who found a wild rose growing alongside a canyon trail:



"A harmless sun" is a wonderful way to describe the flower's sun-like stamens. The writer doesn't tell us that the petals are delicate, but we know it by the way he compares them to "wings of a baby chick." At the end of the poem he hints at the wild rose's short life by

depicting its leaves as "hands waving goodbye." You can almost feel the wind shaking the rose's fragile form.

Like the writer of this poem, remember that poems do not have to rhyme. Trying to find a rhyming word can sometimes ruin the idea you started out with.

After reading the next poem, look at it again. See how the writer makes comparisons in the first four lines, and then, in the last four lines, how she creates a feeling of harmony in the quiet actions of the blossom, the bird, and the flower's buds:

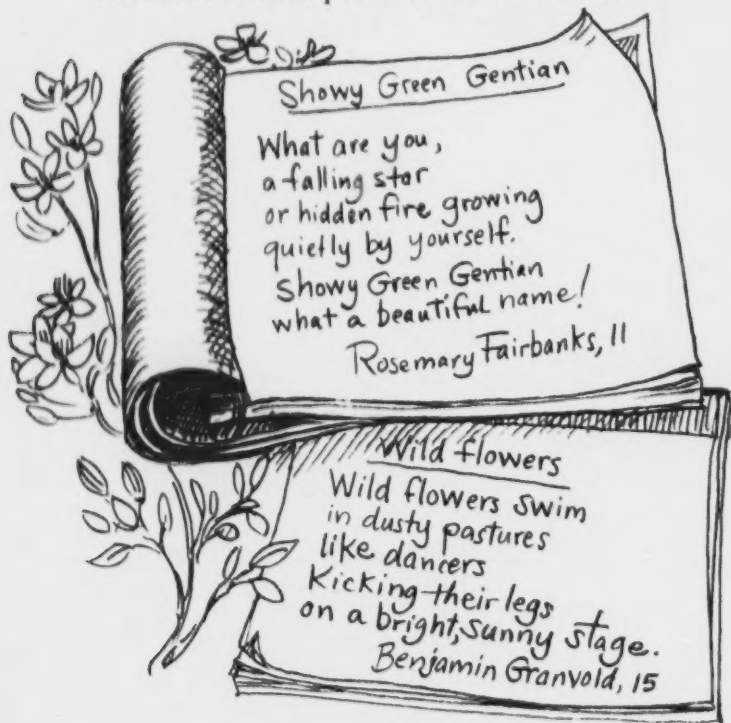


### Ladies-Tresses

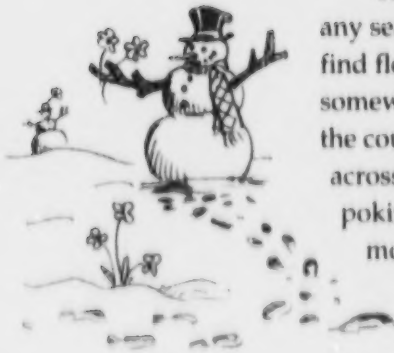
It's white and lacy  
like the bottom of a gown.  
The stem is the color of the sky  
on the night of a hurricane.  
The blossom bows its head  
as a bird whistles in the wind.  
And the buds come out, slowly,  
as if to hear their first directions.

Cynthia Summers, 10

Here are two other poems about wildflowers:



Notice in the poem about the gentian how the writer not only speaks *about* the flower, but also *to* it, just as she might talk with a good friend. She had never seen this wildflower before, except in a wildflower field guide, and could have written about it after looking at its picture in the book. But the tone of excitement in her poem seems to come from encountering the Showy Green Gentian alive in the mountains on a fresh spring morning.



Keep in mind that during any season of the year you can find flowers growing somewhere. In different parts of the country you can even come across small but hardy flowers poking their faces through mounds of snow or rebounding under pelts of steady rain.

And don't forget those often overlooked flowering weeds, such as dandelions, growing in lawns or sprouting through cracks in city sidewalks. Lots and fields yield many different kinds of flowers, like the thistle, whose prickly head and leaves can sharpen your imagination for writing.

After finishing your poem you might note the date and the place where you found the flower. You might also want to sketch the flower next to your poem. Gradually your notebook will grow into a diverse landscape of wildflower poems.



Wild Thistle  
Feb. 11, 1992  
Field behind Nick's house



# Weather

Thunder rattles the woods.  
The legs of the storm run west.

Jenny N. Alexander, 8



Weather is an endless source of ideas for poems. You need only to step outside to feel the freshness of new-fallen snow or a light rainfall. If circumstances limit your activities and keep you indoors, a poetry field trip can be as quick as a few steps to a window. From there you can watch dark thunderclouds riding toward you like a herd of buffalo or catch sight of a rainbow before it disappears.

Think about how clouds, rainbows, snow, hail, fog, lightning, and other weather phenomena often look like other things; then write about them as if they are those things:



The Rainbow  
What is a rainbow? Sometimes  
I think it is a beautiful bracelet  
that turns on a girl's wrist.  
Rick Lee Robins, 7

Besides describing a weather subject being like *one* thing, write a poem which becomes a list of several things you associate with that weather. Think of doing it this way: transform your subject into

1. an animal
2. a tree or flower
3. a tool
4. a person
5. a musical instrument

You don't have to put them in that particular order, but remember to include all five categories like this:

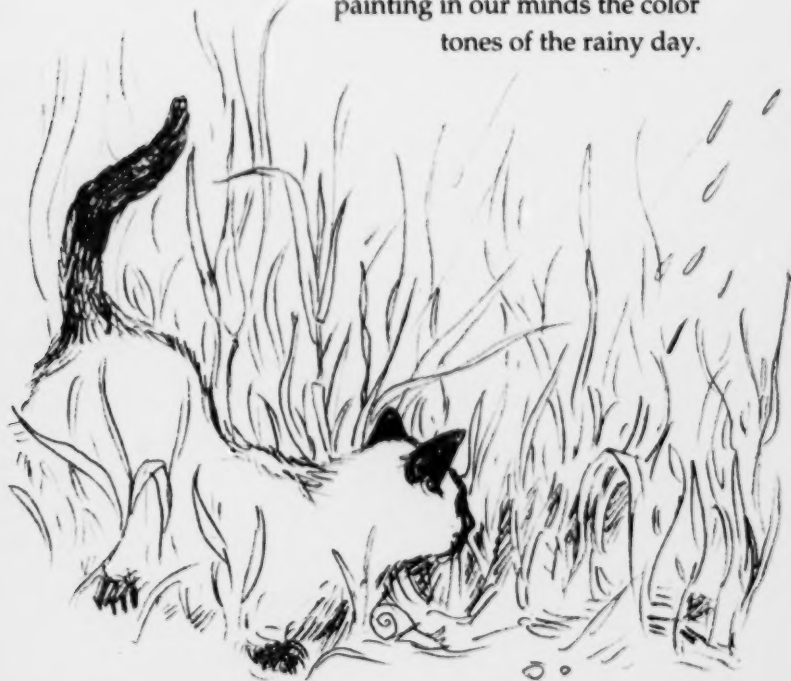
### Rain Is a Tall Thin Girl

Rain is the petals  
falling off a daisy.  
It is a siamese cat  
walking in the fields.  
It sounds like the high  
key on a piano.  
It is a tall thin girl.  
Rain is a hammer  
hitting the ground hard.

Elizabeth Bradley, 7

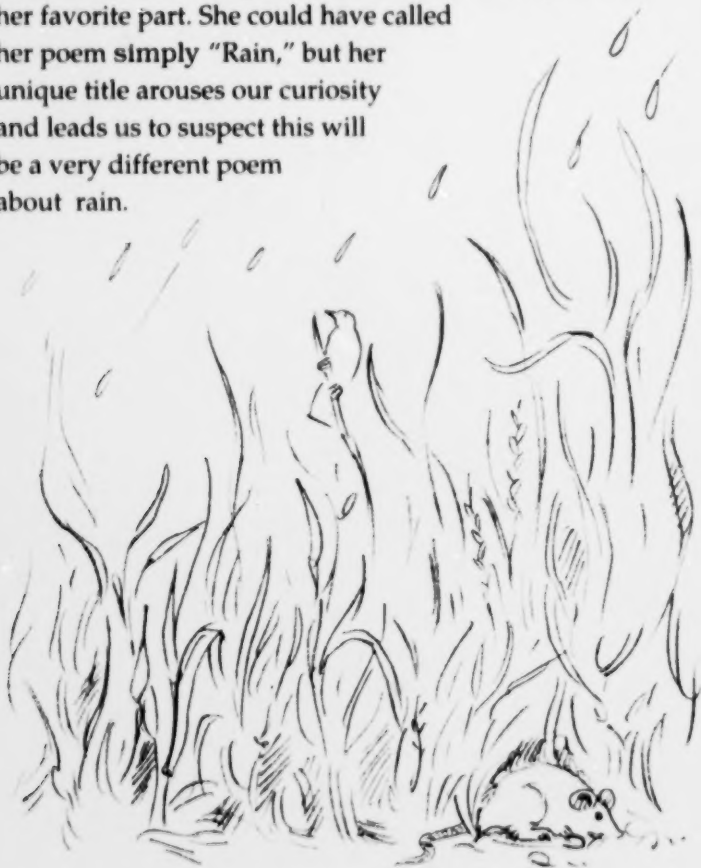
Notice how skillfully the writer of this poem shows the various qualities of rainfall by thinking about rain in the five suggested ways. When she describes rain as "the petals falling off a daisy," she reminds us of at least two things: the petal-like shapes of raindrops and the way rain sometimes falls lightly, almost without sound.

Visualizing rain as a cat "walking in the fields" can make us wonder about a number of things: how rain often flattens and mats down grass and weeds, or how it appears almost as a predator tracking its prey. Making the cat Siamese is perhaps the writer's way of painting in our minds the color tones of the rainy day.

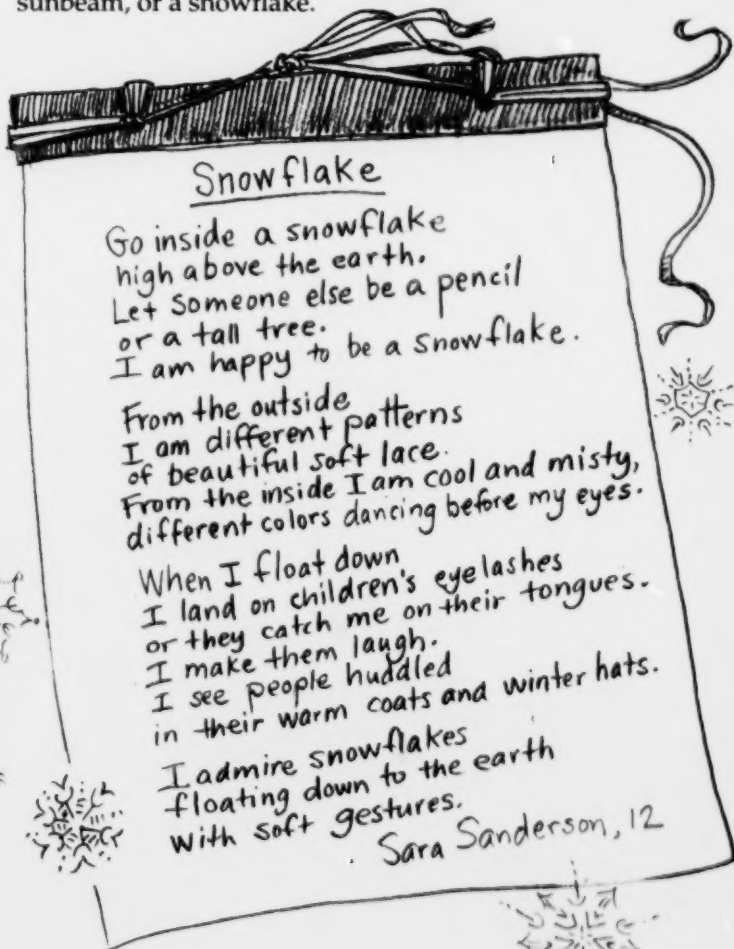


Her careful writing also helps us distinguish the various sounds of rain, as suggested in the *ping* of "the high key on the piano" and the *thud* of "a hammer hitting the ground hard."

A very important feature of this poem is the writer's selection of a title. After she finished writing the poem, she decided that comparing rain to a "tall thin girl" was her favorite part. She could have called her poem simply "Rain," but her unique title arouses our curiosity and leads us to suspect this will be a very different poem about rain.



Another way to explore weather is by imagining how you would feel and what you would do if you were a streak of lightning, a patch of fog, a thunderhead, a sunbeam, or a snowflake.



### Snowflake

Go inside a snowflake  
high above the earth.  
Let Someone else be a pencil  
or a tall tree.  
I am happy to be a snowflake.

From the outside  
I am different patterns  
of beautiful soft lace.  
From the inside I am cool and misty,  
different colors dancing before my eyes.

When I float down  
I land on children's eyelashes  
or they catch me on their tongues.  
I make them laugh.  
I see people huddled  
in their warm coats and winter hats.

I admire snowflakes  
floating down to the earth  
with soft gestures.

Sara Sanderson, 12

To write a different kind of poem about weather, start by making a list of action words (verbs) that you usually associate with people. Words like

erases  
swallows  
recites  
carves  
gossips  
apologizes

yawns  
weaves  
kneels  
paints  
skips

Then, make a second list of verbs you commonly associate with different animals. Words such as

gallops  
hibernates  
perches  
grazes  
slinks  
roosts

slithers  
wags  
laps  
pounces  
swarms

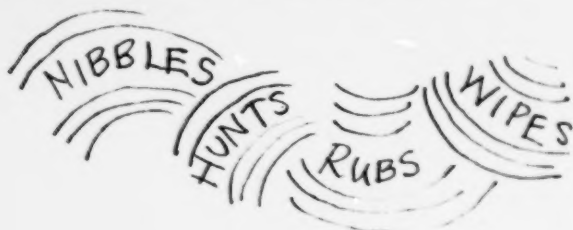
Next, decide upon some aspect of weather for your subject; then choose two or three verbs from each of your lists to start writing your poem. For example, if your subject is "fog," you might begin by describing how

fog *erases* certain objects you ordinarily see on a clear day. You might continue by telling where fog *perches* or *grazes*.

By using uncommon verbs, the boy who wrote the following poem makes us think about wind as if it were some animal-like creature:

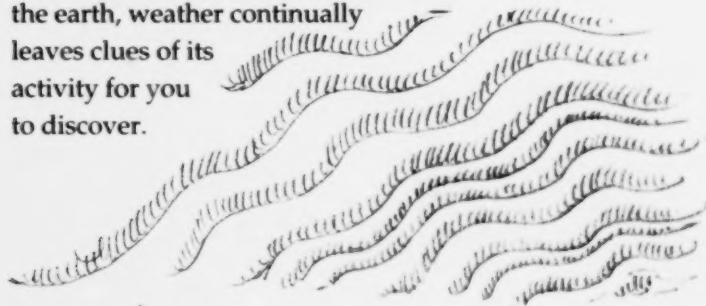


We often use the word *blows* to describe the action of wind. What makes this poem so captivating is the writer's choice of uncommon verbs for wind:



With these words he helps us to think and wonder about wind as something quite mysterious, especially when we read that it "rubs its chin . . . and wipes its mouth."

Search for the effects of weather around your area. While walking on a winter day, you might notice evidence of how very cold air froze swirling movements of water in a gutter or pond. During a long, hot spell following heavy rainfall, you can sometimes find patterned ripples of hardened mud in places like dry gullies. Leaves can tell stories about encounters with wind or rain. In its assorted designs on the earth, weather continually leaves clues of its activity for you to discover.



Look for animal tracks in snow, mud, or sand. Consider shapes of icicles, fog banks, and dust devils. Have rock formations and trees been sculpted by wind? No matter what you might be doing—bicycling downhill on a gusty day, or falling asleep to the rhythm of rain on the rooftop, you are a part of the ever-changing drama of weather. Watch it, feel it, listen to its music, smell and taste it. Then keep a weather log of your own calm and stormy poems.

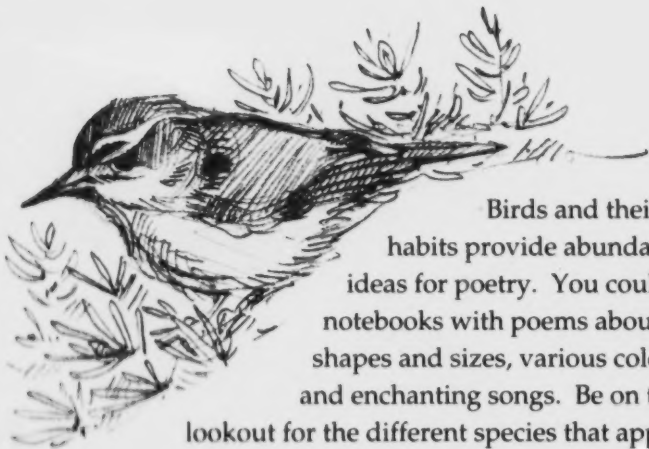




# Birds and Other Animals



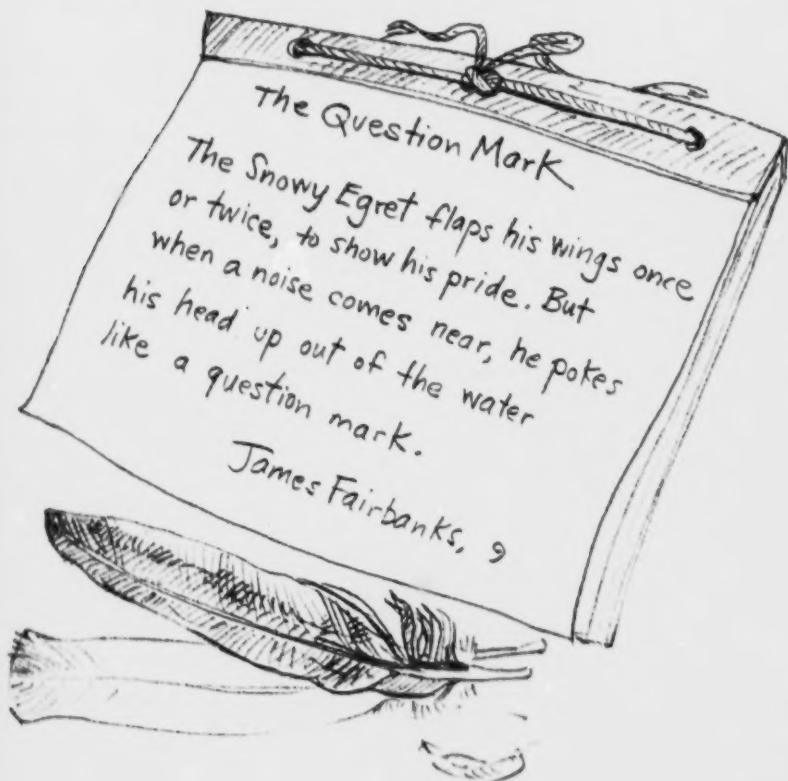
Is that the oncoming darkness  
or the raven in front of the sun?  
Ethan Rampton, 14



Birds and their habits provide abundant ideas for poetry. You could fill notebooks with poems about their shapes and sizes, various colors, and enchanting songs. Be on the lookout for the different species that appear around your home. Check your state map to see if there is a refuge for migratory birds somewhere nearby. Many cities have aviaries with birds you may never find perched on the branches of trees in your yard—birds like swans, cranes, toucans, and flamingos. Mountains, fields, marshes, and swamps attract other species; and there is probably a park in your town with a pond sheltering ducks, geese, and other water birds.



You might begin writing about a bird by using a comparison method. Concentrate on different parts of the bird's body and what those parts look like. Also, think about the bird's graceful or awkward movements and about the similarities between bird behaviors and human habits. The boy who wrote the following poem about a Snowy Egret fishing in a river channel tells us something about the bird's physical appearance and also how it seems to display human pride:



Grace and beauty highlight the next poem written by a girl who is convinced that swans are the most remarkable birds of all:

Swans  
They float like leaves over the lake,  
like crowned Kings,  
but different in ways—  
their long necks resemble arches  
that have been standing  
for thousands of years.

De Ann Perkins, 12



Sometimes, if you are in the right place at the right moment, you might see an unfamiliar bird from a far-off region alight on a branch outside your window during its migratory travels. In the following poem the writer saved the moments she spent watching a Cooper's Hawk devour its prey in her backyard:

### The Hawk in My Yard

- The hawk comes in  
on silent wings  
and perches high atop  
the old bare-branched tree.  
His piercing beak pokes  
his dead prey  
and little sparrow feathers  
fall to the ground.  
○ He sits with his back to me  
and, with a wary eye,  
turns his head  
to watch  
over his shoulder,  
then shifts his feet  
and ruffles his feathers  
as the cold night air draws near.

○ Allison Prescott, 12



The writer just happened to be outside when the hawk came in "on silent wings." As carefully as the hawk watches "with a wary eye," she observes every movement it makes. Her poem seems like an eyewitness account by a reporter at the scene.

Notice her precise, descriptive language: *piercing*, *wary*, *shifts*, *ruffles*. You can tell how important it is for her to choose the most appropriate words to describe her sudden visitor. Her last line, "as the cold night air draws near," leaves us shivering with her in the darkening yard filled with the hawk's presence.

While you are on a poetry field trip to find and write about a bird, you might be attracted by a different animal, such as a horse scratching its ear against the post of a corral:

### Inside a Horse's Ear

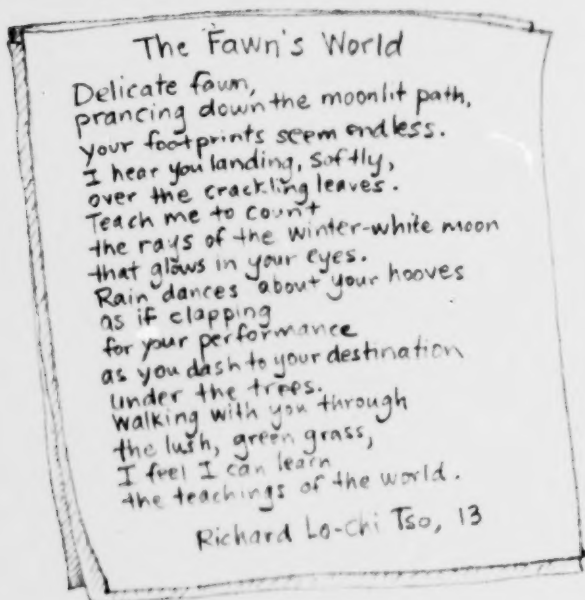
Inside a horse's ear you might hear  
a little bird singing  
or a bee buzzing  
or another horse trotting along a dusty lane  
with its furry mane flowing  
in the soft gentle breeze of a special windy day.  
And those lines in his ear are like  
roads that never end...

Matthew Nash, 9

Perhaps you can remember a time you saw a rabbit bound across a road and disappear into a thicket of bushes at the side. Consider how a rabbit spends its day. What does it see and hear while it moves around looking for food? Make a list of those sights and sounds. Then begin a poem by writing, "Through a rabbit's eyes you will see" or "With a rabbit's ears you can hear." Include the ideas from your list.

Remember to use vivid words for the actions and appearance of the animal you are writing about. For example, in the poem about the horse, the writer does not say the horse is "running down a road." He has the horse "trotting along a dusty lane." His choices of words like *trotting*, *dusty*, and *lane* make his poem come to life for us and appeal to our senses: we can hear the rhythm of the horse's hooves and smell the dust rising from its tracks.

Keep in mind a particular animal's surroundings and write a poem about watching and being with that animal as it moves around its home. It could be a poem in which you speak to the animal.



Wherever you live, you are sharing that space with many nonhuman creatures, and they, in turn, are sharing it with you. Acquaint yourself with the varieties of wildlife that inhabit the area. Writing about these fascinating neighbors could be your own way of celebrating their presence on this planet with you.

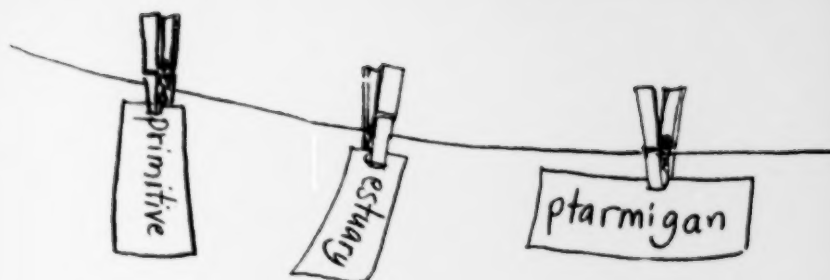


# Building a Nature Wordscape

I'm drifting through words  
like snow in an hourglass.

Ali Wilson, 13

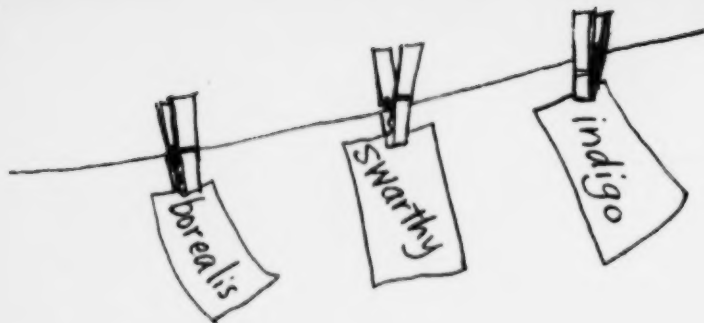
Obsidian  
Newt  
Swarthy  
Borealis  
Grebe  
Alevin  
Grebe  
Conifer  
Igneous  
Yarrow  
Lynx  
Vole  
Estuary  
Acacia  
Osprey  
Indigo  
Basalt  
Bramble  
Quartz



Imagine spending an entire year among a group of friends or classmates without learning their names or anything about them. It's a silly thought. But what about that tree in your yard, or the one in your neighborhood which you pass everyday? Is it a sycamore, a maple, an elm? And the birds that perch on its limbs—are they finches, juncos, chickadees?



Becoming acquainted with nonhuman inhabitants of the earth by learning their names is a first step to discovering their habits, features, and patterns. If you know someone by name, for example, chances are you also know other things about that person. The same thing applies to your relationship with nature, and a growing nature vocabulary helps you to describe the earth's variety with precise and inviting details.



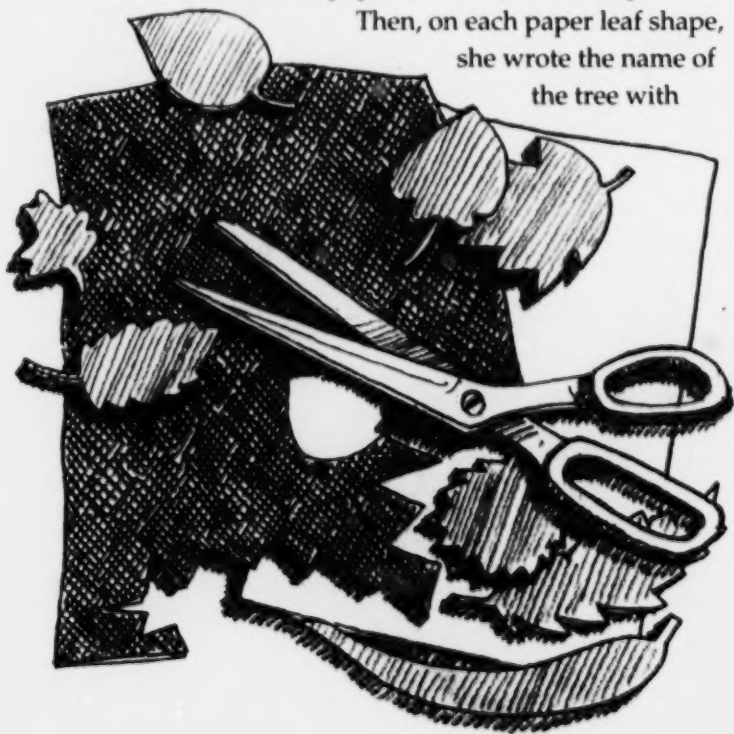
You could begin building a “nature wordscape” by using a method which the American writer Jack London devised when he decided to become a writer. Whenever he came across a word he wanted to learn and remember, he jotted it down on a scrap of paper and copied out its meanings from the dictionary. He stuffed these scraps into his pockets. He would take the words out and study them as he walked to a friend’s house or went sailing on San Francisco Bay in an old boat he had bought for \$6.00.

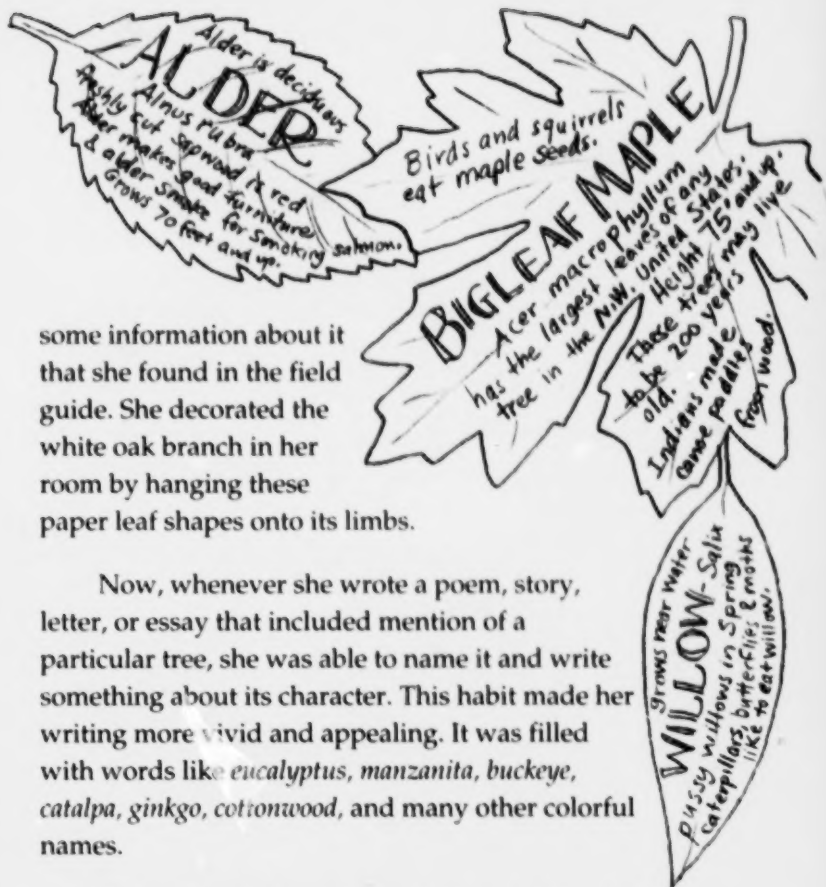
After a while, Jack strung a clothesline across his bedroom, and with clothespins attached the words to the line. Every time he crossed the room, there were the words—musical, powerful, beautiful words that he was beginning to use in his speaking and writing. Words like *primitive*, *estuary*, *ptarmigan*, *borealis*, *swarthy*, and *indigo*. Jack London drew from the store of words he learned this way to find the exact language he needed for describing his experiences around the world and in his own northern California home country. He chose to live in the Valley of the Moon—a place name that appealed to his love for appropriate words.

You can use a similar method to develop a nature vocabulary, or you can think of other ways. Here is an example of what one girl did as she began learning the names of trees in her town. First, she found a large fallen branch of a white oak tree and brought it into her room. Then she walked around her neighborhood with a tree field guide, thumbing through it until she could identify many different trees.

Next, she outlined the shapes of the various trees' leaves on construction paper and cut out the shapes.

Then, on each paper leaf shape, she wrote the name of the tree with





some information about it that she found in the field guide. She decorated the white oak branch in her room by hanging these paper leaf shapes onto its limbs.

Now, whenever she wrote a poem, story, letter, or essay that included mention of a particular tree, she was able to name it and write something about its character. This habit made her writing more vivid and appealing. It was filled with words like *eucalyptus*, *manzanita*, *buckeye*, *catalpa*, *ginkgo*, *cottonwood*, and many other colorful names.

By learning the names and features of trees and writing about them, she developed her knowledge and appreciation of the tree kingdom around her. Also, the information from her field guide prepared her to watch for certain characteristics of different trees at varying times of the year. She began noticing, for example, how the star-shaped leaves of the sweetgum glisten like a galaxy after a rainfall. She learned how the sycamore

gradually creates a patchwork quilt around its branches and trunk through a lifelong process of bark peeling.

Besides a tree vocabulary, you could also build a bird, mammal, flower, fish, sky, pond, or weather vocabulary, using an idea like the girl's project with the fallen branch. You might construct a mobile or design a wall mural for your words. Or, like Jack London, you could use a clothesline. Better still, invent your own way of building a nature vocabulary.

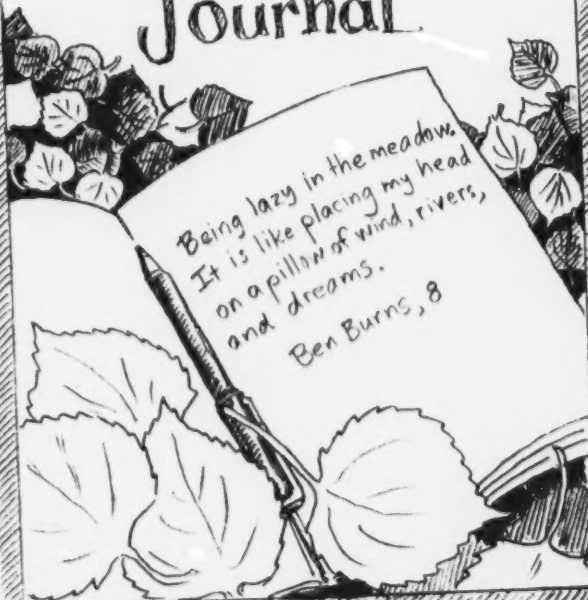




Be a careful observer of  
the natural world. Occasionally  
check out nature field guides from  
your city or school library. Be sure to  
catch nature documentaries on television.

And, always, watch and listen for descriptive words and  
names for the earth's inhabitants and features. Learn  
these words and names until they are as familiar to you  
as your closest friends. Then use them in your writing.  
Soon you will find that everything you write will reflect  
the diversity of the world you live in.

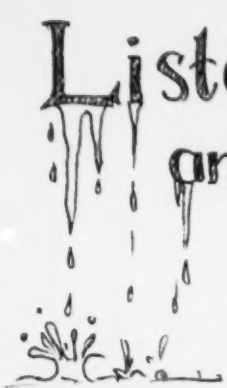
# Keeping a Nature Journal



Being lazy in the meadow,  
It is like placing my head  
on a pillow of wind, rivers,  
and dreams.

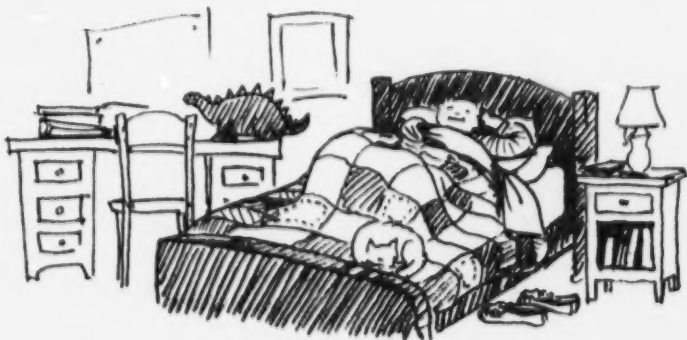
Ben Burns, 8

# Listening and Listing

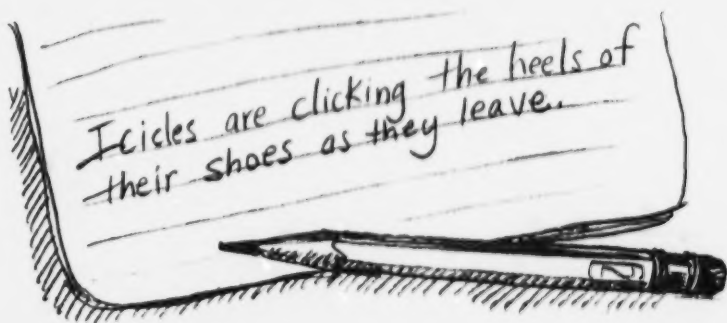


One March morning when winter was turning to spring, a boy was awakened by what he thought was the sound of children chasing each other around the side of the house. When he pulled back the bedroom curtains, he found the real source of the sound: huge, heavy icicles, which had hung all winter like glistening knives from the eaves, were melting in the warming air and dripping into their own small puddles beneath his window.

He got back into bed to listen to the icicles' winter-spring music. He closed his eyes and thought of similar sounds: salmon slapping their tails and fins in the river; the clapping of small stones in the surf on the shore; and pine needles ticking in the high winds in the woods.

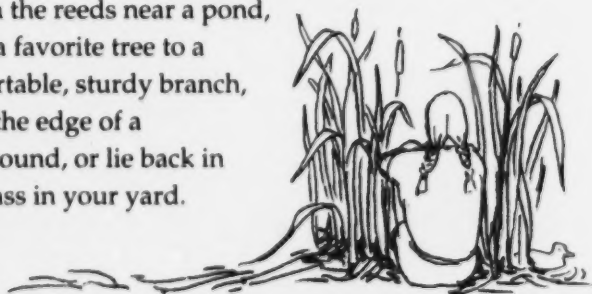


He reached for a journal which he always kept with him and listed these impressions. Then he added:



Because he wanted to keep an account of nature's daily happenings, he recorded the date, March 16, closed the journal, and lay back on his pillow, eyes closed, listening.

You could begin keeping a creative nature journal with a simple listening and listing experience. Good listening times can be in the early morning or evening when your thoughts might not be interrupted by traffic noises or the screams of children playing. First, choose a place outdoors where you like to be alone. You could hide in the reeds near a pond, climb a favorite tree to a comfortable, sturdy branch, sit on the edge of a playground, or lie back in the grass in your yard.



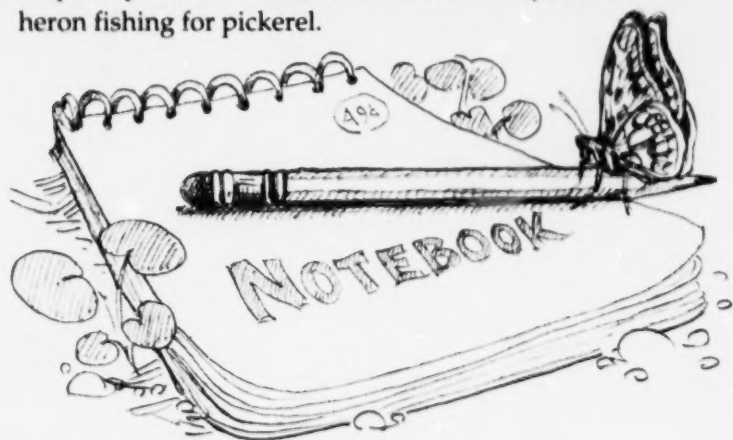


Let's say you choose to sit by a pond. Think about living in the pond and being dependent on it for your survival. If you approach the pond thinking that way, your senses will be very sharp. Be as alert and quiet as a mother duck guarding her eggs in the tangles of cattails and ferns. You will know you are ready to detect the slightest movement or sound if you can hear your own steady breathing.

If you wish, close your eyes and just listen for a while. You don't need to be concerned about listing sounds in your journal right away. Spend time enjoying and wondering about them. Give your attention to the variety of bird songs, the buzzing and droning of insects, and the rustlings of grasses and reeds.



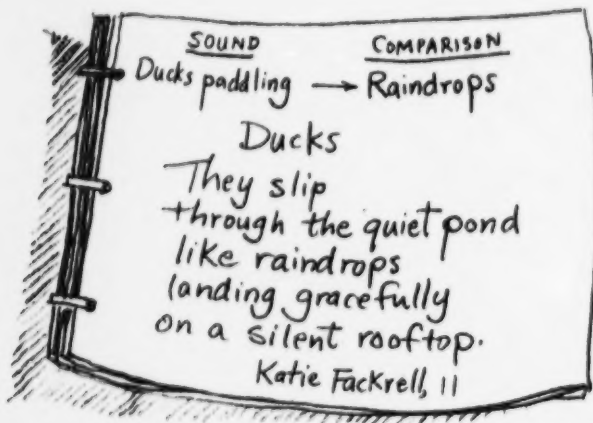
You might be startled by a sudden splashing of water. Could it be the leaping of a frog, a turtle, or a fish? Or perhaps even a muskrat or a beaver? Maybe it is a heron fishing for pickerel.



When you feel ready to write, start listing some sounds. Then, like the boy who wrote about icicles, think about other things that make similar sounds and create your own comparisons. Could the twittering of swallows darting for caddis flies over the surface of the water seem like aspen leaves chattering in an autumn wind? Or could a garter snake moving through cord grass sound like sand rippling over a desert dune?



In your journal, make a list of the actual sounds you hear on the left side of the page. On the right side, list your comparisons for those sounds. You could even select your favorite sound and comparison and use them to write a short poem. Here is a poem written by a girl who compared the paddling of ducks to the sound of raindrops:



Because this writer was listening carefully, she was able to create a visual image as well as a sound image in her poem. This is an important fact about listening: if

you can become very  
quiet, your

other senses will sharpen too. Your stillness will become an invitation to the natural world to show you some of its secrets. A cricket frog might jump onto your leg, mistaking it for a log; or a swallowtail might alight in your hair, thinking it to be a tuft of wild grass.



Time after time, and in unexpected ways, nature will reward your careful attention.

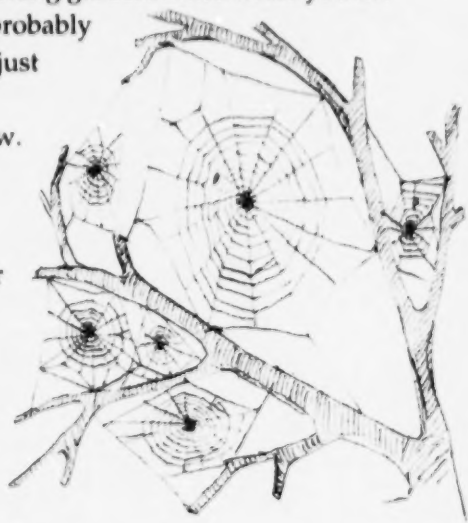


# Backyard Explorations



Your own yard and neighborhood can be the best places for exploring nature's activity, even if you live in a big city. Great Horned Owls are often seen roosting on roofs and steeples as well as in trees; falcons and hawks are known to nest on ledges of skyscrapers; raccoons find their way to ripening gardens. And while you are asleep, spiders are probably spinning their webs just outside—or maybe inside—your window.

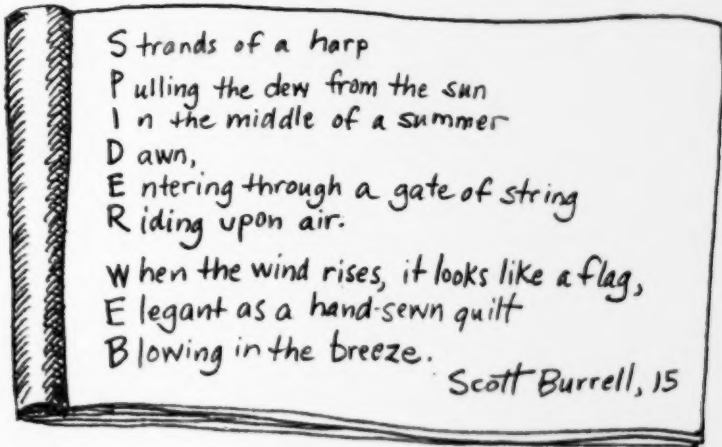
Look around outside in the morning sunlight for the spiders' elegant natural designs. If the sun and air currents are just right, you



might catch sight of one or several of these "little trampolines" waving in the breeze on taut strands. Check for the orb weaver in the center and for whatever prey is still caught in the silky trap.

Morning is a good time to find an abundance of other natural wonders. If you have a cat, follow it on its first prowling of the day. Watch how the cat concentrates totally on something as small as a ladybug climbing a blade of grass. Try to be as aware as the cat; that kind of attention will help you to observe and to write.

If you become interested in something but are not sure about how to start writing, you could begin by writing an acrostic. One form of an acrostic is a poem in which you write the name of something in capital letters going vertically down the left side of your journal page. Then you start building a poem about the subject with words that begin with each letter. Here is an example:



S trands of a harp  
P ulling the dew from the sun  
I n the middle of a summer  
D awn,  
E ntering through a gate of string  
R iding upon air.

W hen the wind rises, it looks like a flag,  
E legant as a hand-sewn quilt  
B lowing in the breeze.

Scott Burrell, 15

The next poem is another example of an acrostic by a girl observing clusters of lilacs in her neighborhood:



Lovely is the  
I nspirational and  
L ackadaisical lilac. The sweet smell and  
A hhh of a purple haze  
C ascading among a field of wonders.  
Ryka Melnychenko, 14

Since the first word of each line has to start with a particular letter, the acrostic form can inspire you to discover new possibilities in your subject as you go from line to line. The letter at the beginning of each line directs your imagination in surprising ways. If you cannot

decide what to write about, try

writing an acrostic using

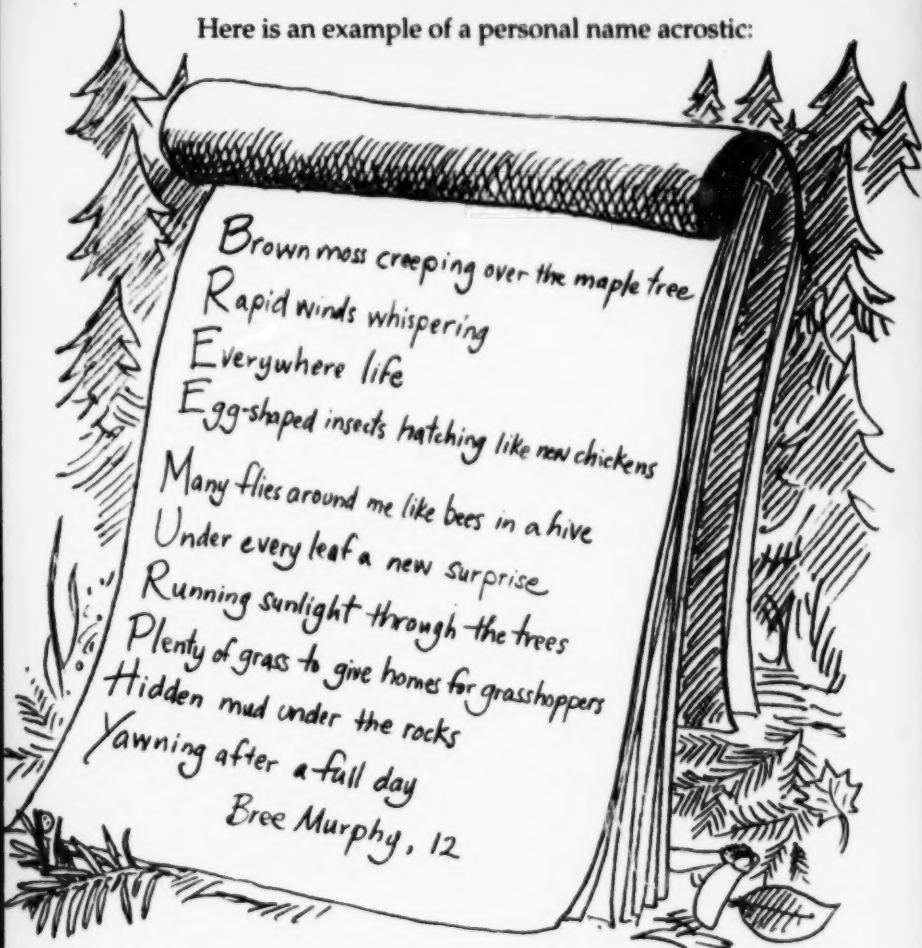
your name. Then let the

letters of your name

help you to focus on  
the variety of things  
around you.



Here is an example of a personal name acrostic:



Your name acrostic can be a personal way of seeing yourself in the natural world. It can also remind you of how you and so many different things live together in unique relationships on the earth.

# A Night Sky ☆

## Journal



No matter where you are, the sky is always above you, playing out its daily drama with the sun and moon, stars, clouds, and changing colors. Consider the sky at night with its constellations and different phases of the moon. In 1851 the great American naturalist, Henry David Thoreau, realized how often we allow the moon to pass, night after night, without paying any attention to its beauty and mystery. "One moon gone by unnoticed," he wrote. Imagine what you miss by not looking for each night's moon and its changes in shapes and brightness. Years and years of moons!



Watch for the harvest moon during the autumnal equinox in late September. This colorful full moon was originally named because it appeared at harvest time and shone so brightly that farmers could work late into the night harvesting their crops. A poet once described this moon as "a pumpkin-colored elephant skipping rope." His vivid comparison is almost as exciting as the moon itself.



You could record the appearances of the moon each night in your journal by creating comparisons. Could the crescent moon be the "wind-filled sail of a pirate's ship," or the "tip of a giant's toenail"? What about the half-moon? Can you imagine it being the "hull of a rowboat sinking into a vast black lake"? Picture the full moon. Is it a "clock without hands" or a "cantaloupe growing in a field of dead weeds"?



Here is a poem by a girl who looked back through her journal, selected her own favorite comparisons for the crescent moon, then put them together as a poem:

### What is the Crescent Moon?

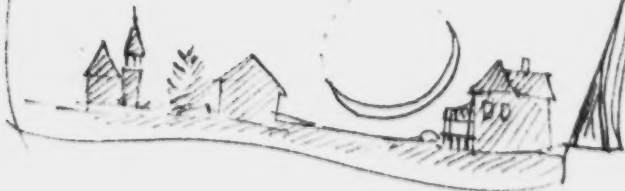
Is it the sly eye of a sleek black cat  
poised to pounce on its prey,

or the crust of a pepperoni pizza  
sneakily eaten by a child?

Is it the streak of fire following a  
shiny black Porsche  
racing to catch up with the sun,  
or one of many ships  
lost in the mysterious Bermuda Triangle?

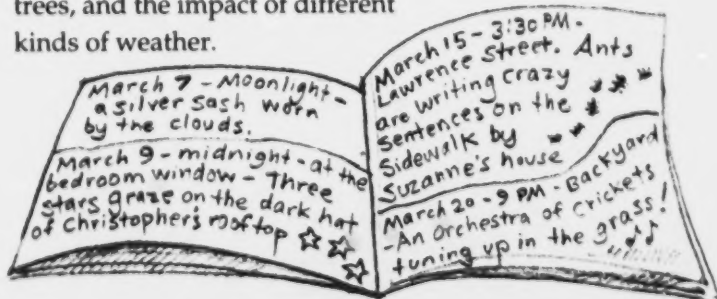
Is it a slit in the sky  
allowing spirits to enter the atmosphere,  
or the most precious jewel  
in the raven-black hair of night?

Jana Farr, 13



You could also follow a similar procedure focusing on the stars and their constellations or on the formations of clouds rimmed by starlight or glowing from moonlight. Think of writing about the moon in your journal and sketching it each night for an entire season or for a whole year. What a wealth of appreciation you will develop about our closest neighbor in space!

A worthwhile practice to establish while keeping your nature journal is noting the location and date of each of your journal entries. This is especially useful if you often return to the same spot for observation and writing. Observing nature's activity in the same place throughout the four seasons will sharpen your awareness of the natural world. You will learn when certain species of animals leave and return to the area, the life cycles of various wildflowers, grasses, and trees, and the impact of different kinds of weather.



A unique kind of history, a natural history, is happening around you every moment of the day and night. If you pay attention, use your imagination, and take your journal everywhere you go, you will always be ready to record it.

## Other Explorations



Every place, creature, or event in the natural world provides an opportunity for wondering and writing. The next nine sections offer new ideas for continuing to fill your journal with poems about your observations. Each experience starts with one poem followed by some thoughts, questions, and suggested observing and writing activities to help you discover other parts of nature. The questions will encourage you to go deeper into the poems and into the mystery and beauty of the natural world which the poems explore. Think of these questions and experiences as new paths you can walk on alone or sometimes with a friend who can exchange different feelings on a shared journey.

# Wandering, Noticing, and Writing

## I DIDN'T KNOW

I didn't know I loved the weeds,  
silent, lazily swaying in the wind.  
I didn't know I loved the old corrals,  
creaking, faded white,  
defying the weather year after year.  
I didn't know I loved the marshes,  
silent, deep, mysterious,  
with their different kinds of reeds  
and black ooze beneath the still waters.  
I didn't know I loved the birds  
fluttering in the early hours of daybreak.  
I didn't know I loved the creeks  
and their songs  
as they polish stones smooth,  
giving new life.

*Shane Stewart, 12*



We often become so busy in our routine of activities, that we hardly notice what surrounds us every day. Shane's title, "I Didn't Know," and the way he repeats it several times in the poem suggest that he is experiencing familiar sights, sounds, and places as if he were discovering them for the first time. His "rediscovery" of creeks, weeds, and weathered corrals moves him to write about them with a feeling of deep joy.



## Questions and Thoughts to Explore

What are some things in your yard or neighborhood that you haven't spent time looking at for a while?

What is one of the most beautiful sights you experience when looking out a window at home, school, or another place you visit often?

What kinds of weather or animal sounds do you hear when waking up in the morning or falling asleep at night?

Even though Shane mentions many things in his poem, he actually focuses on only six:

1. weeds
2. old corrals
3. marshes
4. birds
5. creeks
6. the creeks' songs

Because his description is so rich and full, we are able to experience much more. For example, he doesn't merely tell us, "I didn't know I loved the marshes." He describes the marshes as "silent, deep, mysterious, with their different kinds of reeds and black ooze beneath the still waters." What other parts of his poem are filled with such vivid details?

Read the poem aloud. Which part do you like the sound of best? Does reading it aloud help you to experience the marshes, for example, as if you were there?

Choose a word you like in this poem. Say it aloud. Think about how the sound of the word makes you feel. Does it make you feel restless, lonely, contented, jittery, peaceful?

Who or what, in your opinion, is being given "new life" at the end of Shane's poem? What do you think he means by "new life"?



## Suggestions For Writing

Carry your journal around your neighborhood. Stop occasionally and use your senses to experience what's around you. Kneel and look closely at a blade of grass or patterns in the dirt. Notice smells. Is someone baking bread somewhere, or is a breeze carrying the scent of a certain flower? Walk up to a tree and smell the trunk. Say the word *trunk* aloud.

Jot down your observations every so often. Then listen for a few minutes and compare human-made sounds, such as car traffic, with bird songs or the rustling of leaves. Look around and watch the ways that shadows of trees, fences, or buildings sketch themselves on sidewalks, streets, yards, or fields.

Using your notes, begin a poem listing and describing these "ordinary" things as if you had just discovered them.

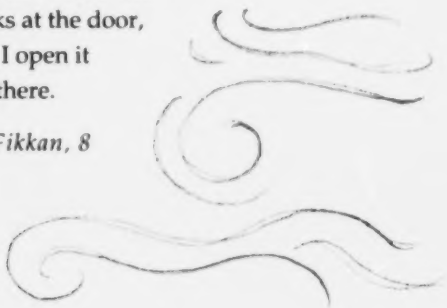
# Finding a Companion in Nature



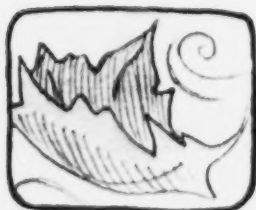
## I WANT TO BRING THE WIND

I want to bring the wind  
wherever I go  
so I won't be lonely.  
When I ride my yellow bike  
right behind me is the wind,  
and when the moon shines on the sea  
the wind blows my boat far.  
It rattles at the windows  
and knocks at the door,  
but when I open it  
no one is there.

*Janna Fikkan, 8*



Sometimes you discover something so wonderful in nature that you feel like being with it most of the time, like a good friend. During times you are without the company of friends or family, nature is with you in one way or another. It could be a single leafless tree outside your window, a wide-open sky, or a chorus of crickets in dark grass. In her poem, Janna reminds us of the companionship we can find with something in the natural world. For her it isn't something tangible, like a rock or a flower or an animal; it is the activity of the wind.



## Questions and Thoughts to Explore

Which line in Janna's poem suggests to you that she considers the wind to be a friend she needs?

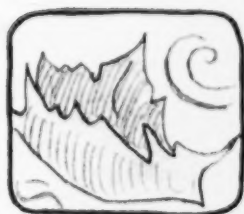
What part of the poem helps you feel the wind against your body?

Recall a time in a particular place when you felt a gentle or a strong wind. Describe the details of your surroundings. What do you remember seeing, smelling,

or hearing? Did the wind seem to make the colors in that place weave together in different ways?

In the last four lines of Janna's poem, does the wind seem like a playful friend, a mysterious visitor, or something else?

If you could choose a kind of weather as a companion, what would it be: snow, sunshine, fog, lightning, thunder, rain, or maybe hail?



## Suggestions For Writing

Choose something in the natural world that you could consider as a companion. It doesn't have to be weather, as in Janna's poem. It could be anything: a season, an animal, a creek, a patch of violets, or the song of a bird. Exploring your yard or neighborhood could help you focus and select.

After choosing your companion, think about its different characteristics: is it bold, radiant, patient, secretive? List words that describe its different qualities.

Also, include words that indicate how it is like and unlike one of your best friends. Use some of these words in your poem.

You could begin your poem, as Janna started hers, by telling why you want your subject to be a companion that is always with you. Then briefly describe two or three things that might happen when you are together. Most likely your poem will turn into an unpredictable adventure with a remarkable friend.

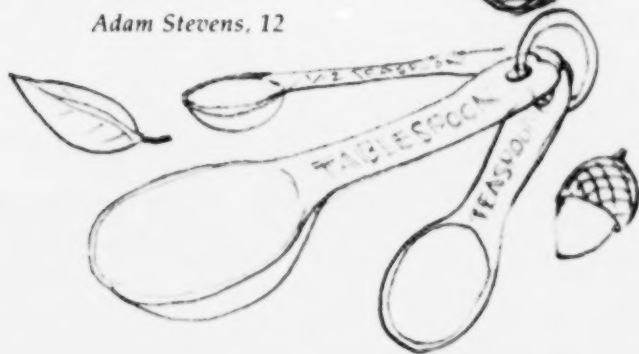
# Creating a Landscape



## A RECIPE FOR A MEADOW

Take a clearing  
in a dark, thick forest.  
Place grass in it  
grown to its full, rich height.  
Slice flowers around  
the now grassy clearing.  
Blend in birds and butterflies  
filled with beautiful colors.  
Stir in animals  
enjoying and loving life.  
Cover with a thick,  
rich coating of sunlight.  
Remove all trace  
of man's destruction.  
Enjoy the mighty peace.

*Adam Stevens, 12*



In "A Recipe for a Meadow," Adam imagines a place where all creatures live in harmony. He uses verbs he found while thumbing through a cookbook. Just as a chef might give directions for preparing and cooking a tasty dish, Adam tells how to create a portrait of an ideal meadow. If you listed the recipe-sounding verbs in his poem, your list would look like this: *take, place, slice, blend, stir, cover, remove, and enjoy.*



### Questions and Thoughts to Explore

Notice the way Adam gradually develops his poem, starting with "a clearing." The clearing seems like a clean, empty bowl a cook would use to mix the particular ingredients. What are the ingredients Adam places in his container, the clearing? Can you think of other ingredients that might have been included in this meadow recipe?

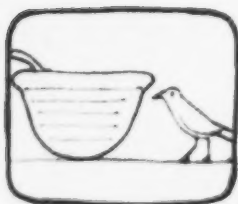
Which ingredients appeal to your senses most clearly in this poem? Which of your senses is affected

most when Adam says, "Cover with a thick, rich coating of sunlight"? Does more than one of your senses respond to this image?

Which different species of birds, butterflies, and other animals do you see or hear in Adam's meadow? What specific flowers do you smell and see?

What do you think about when you read, "Remove all trace of man's destruction"?

How can peace be mighty? How would you "Enjoy the mighty peace"?



## Suggestions For Writing

Look through a cookbook. As you read the directions for several different recipes, write down the verbs which tell you what to do with the ingredients. Make a list of about ten or twelve different verbs. Keep in mind that you probably won't use all the verbs you find. Be selective for your poem.

Some possible subjects might be a recipe for a cave, a foggy morning, a bird refuge, a season or particular month, a moonlit field, a river, or a sunset. Once you decide on your subject, start listing some ingredients. Let's say your poem is going to be a recipe for a hike. Besides the more obvious ingredients, such as a mountain trail and a backpack, think about including feelings related to a hike. You might enjoy the hike with something like "the companionship of a September breeze in the birches," for example.

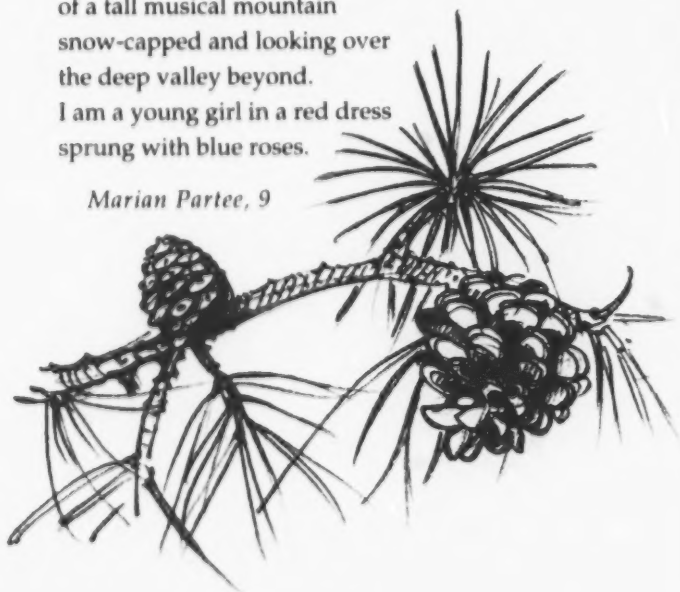
Now—enjoy your writing!

# Becoming Your Surroundings

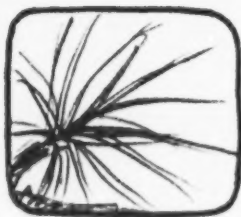
## MY MANY THOUGHTS IN THE MOUNTAINS

I am the brilliant sun  
gazing at a solemn rock in the shade.  
I am the cloud-covered sky  
stretching like elastic  
over old pines touched lightly  
with soft snow frost.  
I am the dark purple shadow  
cast by a spruce reaching to the tip  
of a tall musical mountain  
snow-capped and looking over  
the deep valley beyond.  
I am a young girl in a red dress  
sprung with blue roses.

*Marian Partee, 9*



In "My Many Thoughts in the Mountains" Marian offers us vivid details of what she experienced when she allowed herself to become totally absorbed in her environment. Her poem seems to be written by someone lost in a dreamy thoughtfulness of the beauty around her. She expresses her awe, not merely through description, but also through the feeling of *becoming* her surroundings.



### Questions and Thoughts to Explore

Besides the obvious sections that invite your sense of sight, find parts of the poem that call upon your other senses. For example, can you hear the trees being "touched lightly with soft snow frost"?

How can a mountain be musical?

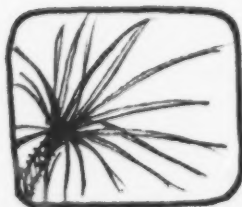
Name about three different times you have heard music not created by humans or human-made things. Think about the music of water, animals, branches rubbing together, or rocks rolling down a slope.

Recall where you were when you heard nature's various kinds of music, and compare those sounds to the sounds of human-made musical instruments.

Which parts of Marian's poem create for you a feeling of deep silence?

What do you think it is about her surroundings that makes her feel so much a part of them?

Notice how Marian portrays herself and what she is wearing at the end of the poem. Does her red dress "sprung with blue roses" make her seem as if she, too, is growing from the earth like the trees?



## Suggestions For Writing

With your journal in hand, find a place where you can feel comfortably alone with your thoughts. You could prop yourself against a tree or lie back in the grass and daydream.

Put yourself in a kind of mind-wandering mood, and allow your thoughts to drift from one thing to another, like a bee alighting for a moment on one flower before floating off to the next.

Then focus your attention on something in particular—something close by, like a twig, or off in the distance, like a cloud. Concentrate on its color, texture, shape, and other qualities. Imagine how it would feel to *be* what you are observing.

You could write your poem about being one or several things. Create four or five sentences about your subject or subjects, as if you *really are* what you are writing about. Remember to fill your poem with descriptive details.

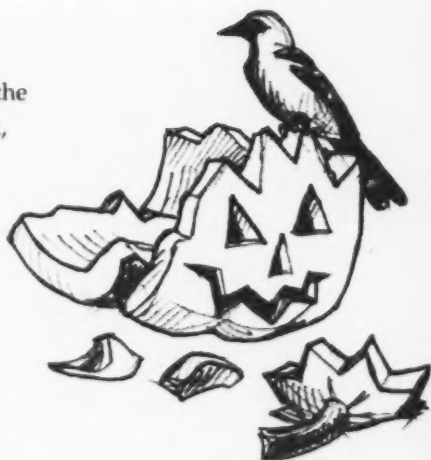
You could end your poem by describing yourself in such a way that you seem to blend in with your surroundings. Perhaps something you are wearing is the color of the bark or leaves of a nearby tree. Or maybe your hair is waving like grass in a breeze. Writing about how you resemble other things in nature can inspire you to think about your relationship to them. It can also help you to remember that you, too, are a part of the natural world.

# Colors in the Natural World

## ORANGE

Is it what you find  
when you dig  
into that  
ball of mold  
under your bed?  
Is it the sun  
as it gets ready  
for bed?  
Is it the hood  
of an Oriole, a Tanager, the  
rusty cape of a Grosbeak,  
or is it clay  
baked  
in the scorching  
desert sun,  
a smashed pumpkin at  
the end of October,  
or the campfire  
lighting the peace  
of the forest?

*Timothy Bosen, 11*



The natural world is filled, not only with many different colors, but also with many shades and tones of those colors. Some colors are more prominent in certain kinds of weather or during specific seasons. "Orange" is a poem listing a variety of things associated with the color in several places and at various times.



### Questions and Thoughts to Explore

Where in Timothy's poem do you find the color orange to be brightest?

What do you think is the "ball of mold"?

Why do you suppose Timothy wrote his poem in the form of questions? How could the poem change your responses if it were in the form of statements?

Notice where Timothy uses attractive, descriptive words. For example, instead of writing the "head" of an Oriole, he chooses the word, "hood." Find another place where his choice of words attracts your interest.

Do you think that Timothy might have looked through a bird field guide to find some interesting names of birds that are orange or have orange features?

Does placing the word "baked" on a line by itself give you a particular feeling about the clay?

Has the poem helped you to experience the color orange in a new way? How?



## Suggestions For Writing

Look around for different colors. Choose one color you see. It might be gray, if the day is foggy, or you might choose blue after catching sight of that flash of color from the flight of a damselfly.

When you decide upon a color, begin writing down the names of things around you which have that color. Also, allow your memory to recall animals, flowers, or other creatures that would be present in

other seasons. You could also look through nature field guides for names to add to your list.

Besides listing what you can see, include feelings also. For example, if you choose the color purple, can you think of a feeling that seems purple? When Timothy connects orange to "the campfire lighting the peace of the forest," he associates orange not only with the orange-colored flames of the fire, but also with a feeling of calm and tranquility.

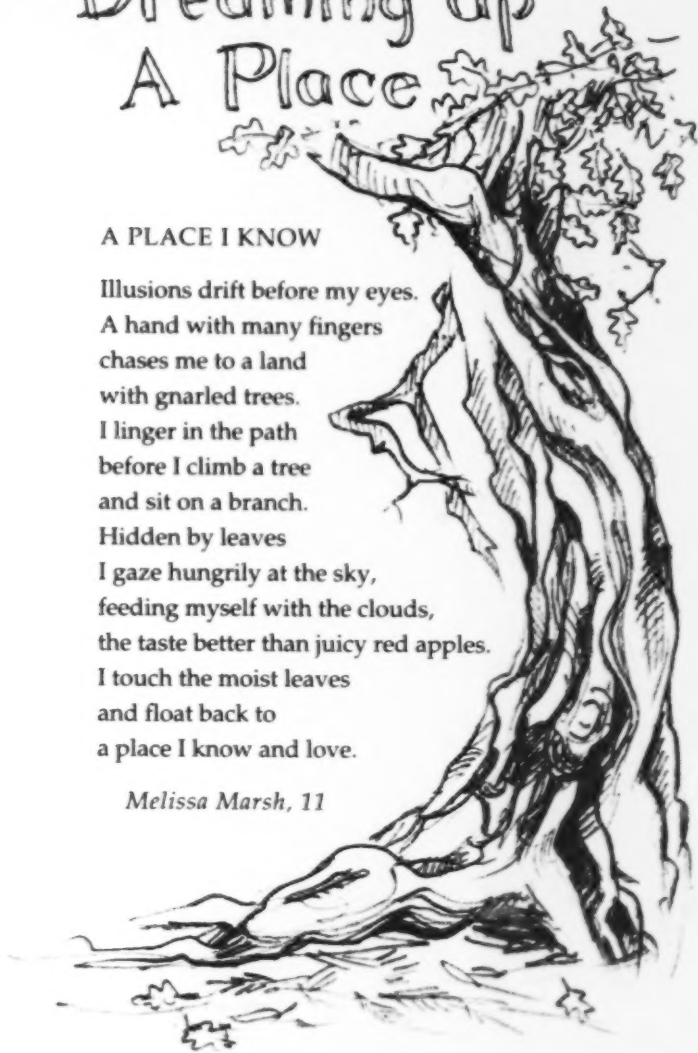
Now, review your list, and be selective. Choose about seven or eight things from your list and start building a poem about your color by describing those objects in an unusual way. Remember to fill your color poem with variety.

# Dreaming Up A Place

## A PLACE I KNOW

Illusions drift before my eyes.  
A hand with many fingers  
chases me to a land  
with gnarled trees.  
I linger in the path  
before I climb a tree  
and sit on a branch.  
Hidden by leaves  
I gaze hungrily at the sky,  
feeding myself with the clouds,  
the taste better than juicy red apples.  
I touch the moist leaves  
and float back to  
a place I know and love.

*Melissa Marsh, 11*



"A Place I Know" is a dreamlike poem about an imaginary place. It is the kind of poem which can be written by first experiencing a real place in the natural world. Melissa, for example, was inspired to write her poem after climbing and sitting in a favorite tree.



### Questions and Thoughts to Explore

Which word or line in the poem gives you the first clue that Melissa is writing about a place she visited in her imagination?

Which lines really develop the poem's dreamlike quality?

What are Melissa's feelings about this place? Which words or parts of the poem express those feelings?

What prompts Melissa to "gaze hungrily at the sky"? Do you think she is hungry for food, or for something else? How can clouds "taste better than juicy red apples"?

There is one color word in the poem. What other colors are present but not mentioned?

Do you think the "moist leaves" Melissa touches are the leaves of a real or an imaginary tree?

What do you suppose causes her to "float back" from her dream?



## Suggestions For Writing

Find a favorite spot outside and sit quietly for a while. A tree would be good to dream in, or you could lie on your back and wonder about the cloud shapes and colors drifting high above you. Wherever you choose to be, allow what is actually there—sounds, smells, tastes, textures, sights—to carry you to an imaginary place.

Think of it as a region where you are the only human visitor. Describe its geographical and other physical features. Is it like a hidden gully surrounded by trees, or the top of a skyscraper that pokes through the

clouds? Are there mountains and valleys with rivers of rainbows? Are there grasses that grow unusually high? Is the ground bare and dry with hardy desert plants? What species of animals inhabit or visit this area? How did you get there? By hiking, sailing, flying, riding a bicycle?

Begin writing a poem, briefly describing your journey and the place you find. Mention one or two things you might do there. Help your readers feel as if they are gazing at everything through your eyes and with your excitement over your discovery.

At the end of your poem, you might tell how your thoughts returned from this dreamed-up place. Did the fragrance of flowers, the warmth of sunshine, the call of a bird bring you back?

Read your poem aloud and note how many of its dreamlike images connect in some way to your actual surroundings. The more you observe and write, the more you will see how the landscape nourishes your imagination.

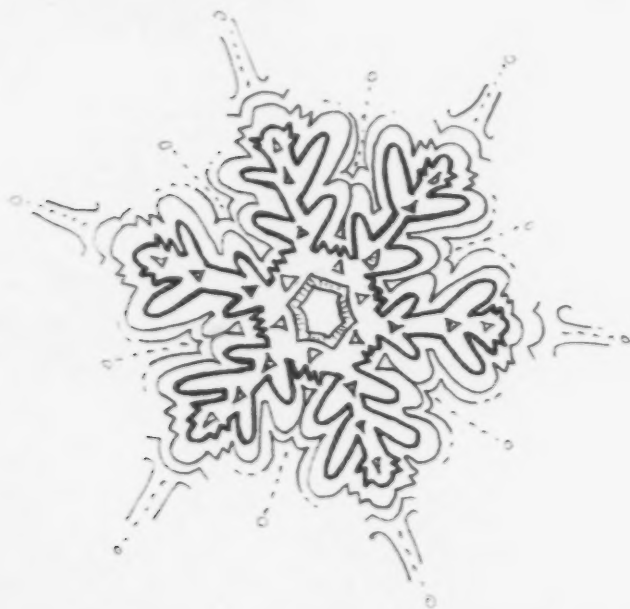
# Nature in Your Hand

## ICE

A numbing cold sweeps up my hand like a frost-bitten storm. I try to ignore the chilling cold reminding me of its icy presence. Suddenly, my hand seems to meld into the ice, then the transparent, icy sparkle slowly and steadily rises up my body; and the lasting feeling of a chilling cold overcomes me. And in my mind I'm frozen in time, and eternity gives me its knowledge.

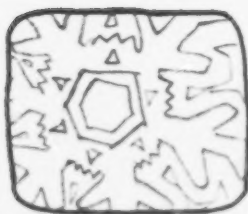
Hold the ice. Touch it. And feel its silence.

*Nicolaas Bodkin, 11*



"Ice" is an example of a prose poem. A prose poem might be thought of as a brief description of an object, an experience, or a place, including an intense feeling about the subject. Although this applies to other poems also, an obvious difference is that prose poems are not deliberately broken up into specific lines.

Even writers of prose poems have difficulty explaining why they write a poem in the form of prose. Perhaps one reasonable explanation is that a writer chooses the prose form because it seems to fit the subject of the poem, just as someone chooses a particular style of clothing because it seems to fit the wearer.



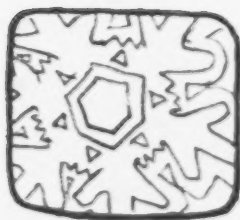
## Questions and Thoughts to Explore

What do you suppose was Nicolaas' experience behind this poem? Do you think he was cross-country skiing, holding an icicle, ice fishing, or doing something else? Find places in his poem to support your idea.

Have you ever felt "a numbing cold" that affected your body "like a frost-bitten storm"?

What do you think Nicolaas means when he writes, "in my mind I'm frozen in time"?

At the end of his poem he invites us to "Hold the ice. Touch it. And feel its silence." How can you *feel* silence? Describe the silence of ice. Compare the silence of ice with the silence of something else, like a pencil, a poppy, or an old boot.



## Suggestions For Writing

Write a short prose poem portraying what happens when you hold a certain object. For example, you could search outside for something like a stone or a pine cone slightly smaller than your hand. Sit quietly for a while, holding it in one hand. Close your eyes and feel its shape

and texture. Hold it until it reminds you of something else. Does it rest in your hand like a boat anchored in a cool, calm lake?

Describe what it seems to become in your hand.  
(For Nicolaas, the ice seems to become a silent storm.)  
Then think about the feeling that holding it gives you. Is it a feeling of comfort, darkness, peace, loneliness?  
Somewhere in your poem you might want to invite your readers to taste or hear or touch that feeling.

Remember to keep your prose poem brief. If you include too many details, it will lose its focus. Keep only those details that describe the transformation of the object as it seems to become something else while you are holding it.

# Rhythms in the World And in Words

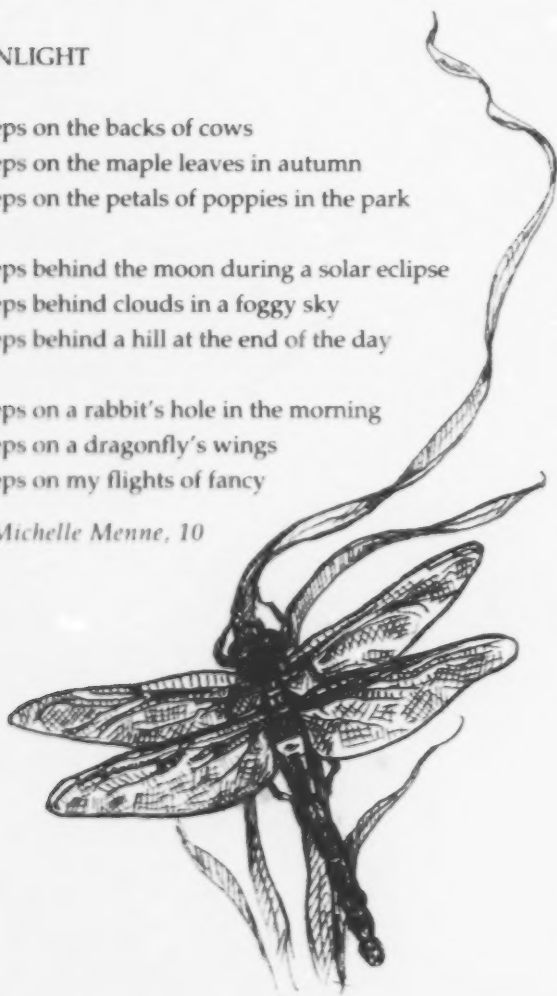
## SUNLIGHT

sleeps on the backs of cows  
sleeps on the maple leaves in autumn  
sleeps on the petals of poppies in the park

sleeps behind the moon during a solar eclipse  
sleeps behind clouds in a foggy sky  
sleeps behind a hill at the end of the day

sleeps on a rabbit's hole in the morning  
sleeps on a dragonfly's wings  
sleeps on my flights of fancy

*Michelle Menne, 10*



In her poem, "Sunlight," Michelle uses an uncommon word to describe the action of the sun. Her choice of the verb "sleeps" instead of "shines," the repetition of the word, and the variety of things she has the sunlight sleeping on or behind, draw immediate attention to her subject. Besides creating a feeling of the sun's widespread influence and presence, the repetition builds a sense of rhythm and flowing sound patterns from one line to the next. If you read the poem aloud, you can hear the rhythm and feel the flow.



### Questions and Thoughts to Explore

Which lines do you feel are the most rhythmic?

Why do you think Michelle chose "sleeps" to portray what sunlight is doing in her poem? What could have inspired her to talk about sunlight as sleepy? How can sunlight seem to sleep on anything?

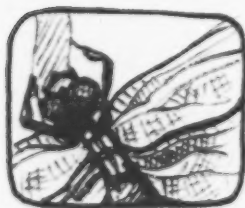
Does repeating the word "sleeps" contribute to an overall sleepy atmosphere in the poem?

What is the most sleepy image, for you, in the poem? Which line do you feel creates an intense feeling of the sunlight's warmth?

In some of the poem's images, sunlight is sleeping on things that are moving. Where do you find those moving images of sunlight?

Can you visualize the patterns on the dragonfly's wings as sunlight sleeps on them and filters through them?

Notice how Michelle ends her poem with flying images of a "dragonfly's wings" and her "flights of fancy." Does her choice of placing those two lines together and at the end seem to bring her poem to a satisfying completion for you?



## Suggestions For Writing

Choose one subject from your environment, a subject such as the grass, the sky, a river, trees, or snow. Then give it an uncommon action. For example, if you decide to write about snow, make your key action word (verb) one like "blossoms" instead of "falls."

Proceed to build a poem by using that verb for your subject at the beginning of each line. Repeating the verb

at the beginning of every line intensifies the feeling of your subject's action throughout the poem. Let your title be the name of the subject, and avoid mentioning the title word in your poem.

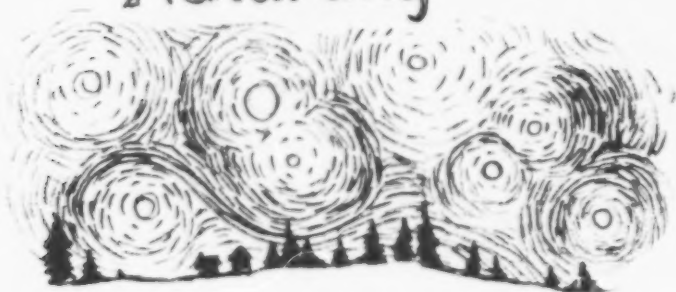
Create a different image in each line. Notice, for example, how Michelle has sunlight sleeping on or behind a variety of things; each of her nine lines contains a new image.

Besides creating a new image in every line, include phrases that tell when, where, or how your subject is performing the action you have given it. Such details provide precise, vivid description.

You could write many lines and then go back and cut out some that might not contribute to the poem's variety or its rhythm. Read your poem aloud several times before making any cuts.

Write your poem in such a way that you and your readers can feel totally surrounded by your subject. Then share it with someone by reading it as a poem praising and celebrating nature.

# Growing a Poem Naturally



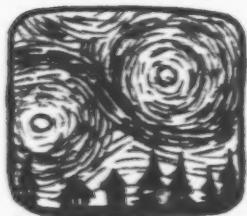
## NIGHT

The world's children  
are lost in their dreams  
of gentle  
breezes. Darkness circles  
the cloudless  
sky, beneath  
the whispering  
stars. Young travelers  
are lost in a lonely  
sleep as cold as winter.

children  
dreams  
gentle  
circles  
cloudless  
beneath  
whispers  
travelers  
lonely  
winter

*Jeffrey Odell, 10*

"Night" is the kind of poem you can write with a word list and without knowing before you begin what your subject will be. Before discussing how Jeffrey compiled and used his list to write his poem, let's wonder about the poem itself.



### Questions and Thoughts to Explore

Who do you think are "the world's children"? Who are the "young travelers"? Could they be something other than people? Could they be leaves, animals, snowflakes?

What do you suppose Jeffrey means when he describes the children and the travelers as "lost"?

What could the children's "dreams of gentle breezes" be? Do you think of them as real breezes, or as something else?

How can stars whisper? Describe a sky in which stars seem to whisper.

How can sleep be "lonely" and "as cold as winter"?

Find a word in "Night" which describes your feelings while reading the poem.



## Suggestions For Writing

After sitting or walking outside and observing your surroundings, make up a list of ten words. Write these words in a vertical position on the right side of your journal page. Allow the place and the time to inspire your word list. Include words that tell what you see and hear and that describe the way you feel and where you are. Your last word could be the season of the year or the weather.

Next, begin writing a poem of ten lines. The last word in each line should be the word from your list. For example, notice that the first word in Jeffrey's list is "children." See how he ended the first line in his poem with that word. His second word is "dreams"; therefore, "dreams" is the last word in his second line. Notice that he changed the form of the seventh word, "whispers," to "whispering." Depending on the way your poem is

growing, and if you think it is necessary, you can change the form of any word in your list.

Check Jeffrey's poem carefully to make sure you know how to proceed. Don't spend a lot of time getting started. You don't even have to think about a subject before you write. Let your poem grow line by line, and the subject, or subjects, will grow naturally as you go along.

Writing a poem this way is like walking down a path with ten curves. After going around each curve on a path, you are able to see what was hidden from your view before you turned. In your poem, the end-word of each line is a curve that leads your mind to turn and discover something waiting for your imagination.

When you finish writing, read your poem aloud. You will most likely be surprised by what you wrote. Creative writing and nature are very much alike: they lead to endless discoveries.



It seems fitting that the word, *anthology*, which is a "collection" of poems, comes from a word that means "gathering flowers." In much the same way that certain flowers grow in specific climates and places, these poems have grown out of the different landscapes and imaginations of the writers. They celebrate the world of animals, seasons, weather, trees, places, feelings, and flowers. Like flowers, with their varied colors, textures, and smells of the earth, they have been gathered here for you to enjoy and to inspire you to write about the landscape in which you live and dream.

## IN A SNOWY FIELD

April . . . something has tracked across the snow,  
something not concerned with lost footsteps.

It is like a snake that splits  
and leaves its skin in the sand.

It is like rocks on the shore  
scraped smooth by the sea.

It is like children, watching  
from car windows, their house grow smaller.

Dead leaves crumble on the snow's surface,  
then blow away over the elms.

*Kelly Shreeve, 16*

## WALKING IN WINTER

I love to walk in late December  
in the first fury  
of winter's wrath  
in the swirling snow.  
It settles on my cold coat  
and my breath turns  
into white wandering winds  
like a train trudging  
through the mountains in the morning—  
my white winter dreams. . . .

*Keith Bateman, 14*

## THUNDER

Thunder is a crow cawing softly  
to a tree. It is my mother  
calling me in for lunch  
when I was having a good time.  
Thunder is a loud trumpet  
playing a song I hate!  
It is a black-eyed Susan.  
Thunder is a screwdriver  
tightening the sun to the sky.

*Kristen Fikkan, 7*

## SAYING "THUNDER" ALOUD

I can feel the rolling madness  
of darkness,  
strong and unrelenting  
as its mysterious syllables  
move my tongue in lines of grey.

*Ali Wilson, 13*

## STORM

While the dogwood tree  
barked in the wind  
and the tiger lilies ran  
on the pillows of the sky  
like the speed of light,  
your tears fell  
down your face like  
raindrops falling in puddles.

*Tyra Landis, 9*

## RED WAGON

All morning rain plunges  
from swollen clouds  
wearing black coats,  
reciting prayers  
against the windowpane.

This afternoon,  
outside, rainbows gather  
in a red wagon.

*Stacey Miller, 16*

## DANDELION

Dancing around the garden  
Almost laughing,  
Nagging the drab  
Depressed grass to be  
Excited for spring.  
Little sunlight,  
I plant you in paper cups  
On my windowsill  
Near the sky.

*Elizabeth Helsby, 15*

## HEDGEHOG PRICKLY POPPY

living under the midnight light,  
embracing the ground,  
feeling the silk leaves,  
passionate.

*Casey Stott, 11*

## LILY OF THE VALLEY

Little flowers  
In my mother's garden  
Living under the rhododendrons  
Your little leaves popping up among the weeds

Oh, as fragile as glass  
Fragrant as grandmother's perfume

Tulip-like leaves that fool the eye  
How they blend with the grass,  
Ever persistent, against the dandelions

Vehemently growing  
A bell tower of white  
Lightly chiming in the spring breeze  
Lovingly stroking the soil with your  
Energetic roots  
Your precious flowers fall

*Sara Lingafelter, 14*

## THE BIG PINE

A big pine  
standing with many quills.  
Are you the home  
of the porcupines?

The pine  
becoming the grandfather  
of the animal-shaped clouds.

The north wind  
making the pine shatter.

Some quills fall, landing  
on a bear's paw,  
making him growl.

*Zachary Gertsch, 8*

## SHADOWS

In a sunny day  
in a park  
the only things that move  
are black, crowded, bumping  
shadows.

The shadows follow me  
wherever I go like  
eagles in a sky.  
The shadows are  
stiff, but people  
move and fly.

A crow doesn't  
need a shadow  
because of its  
color.

When I die,  
the shadow  
cries with me.

*Jason Growler, 12*

## AN EARLY MORNING STROLL

They run with majestic beauty  
through fields of grass,  
through the pasture  
shadowed by willows,  
over the young tufts.

They graze all day  
sampling the green plants,  
nuzzling in their roots.  
Two Indian ponies  
happy behind a fence  
under the early morning light.

*Ben Gregg, 13*

## LOOKING INTO A HORSE'S EYES

Looking into a horse's eyes  
is like going inside a cave of questions  
without answers.

*Scott A. Nelson, 8*

## THE TURTLE'S SHELL

The turtle's shell  
is a sidewalk of shadows.

The inside is a  
pocket of happiness.

The turtle lives  
in that forest of quietness.

*Justin Dickman, 8*

## BEEES

In swift dark clouds  
they travel,  
carrying closely guarded  
secrets, their soft humming  
lost along the way.

*Annie Beddoes, 13*

## WHEN THE FROG CALLS

at twilight  
from the swamp near the birches,  
I'll go to meet him  
in the ooze  
to swim  
among the creatures  
of the marsh.

We'll do the frog paddle  
as the moon rises  
and the stars come out—  
as if from nowhere.

Then we'll jump  
into a tree  
and spend the night.  
While crickets click  
and toads croak,  
we'll watch the stars,  
in stillness.

And before the sun begins to rise,  
we'll say goodbye  
with one last dive,

swimming swiftly and smoothly  
as the crickets hush  
their nightly song.

*Mindy Hanson, 14*

## A CRICKET'S EYE

I look into  
a cricket's eye  
and see  
a falling star  
in back of me.

*Yolanda Adakai, 7*

## ELEGANT

A weeping willow  
in the dreary rain,

a swan reaching  
a wonderland of blue,

a tulip awaking  
to a sun full of mysteries,

a starry sky  
without a moon,

clear creek water  
drifting down my throat  
on a raft of deep red.

*Vanessa Johnson, 9*

## A MORNING VALLEY

Ripples cross a pond.  
Water drips from the ceiling  
of a hollow  
cave, a little river  
trickling down, lacing  
the valley. Wildflowers  
burst elegantly.  
A duck and her young  
go drifting through the pond.  
The valley is eternal, little  
voices whispering  
down through the forest.

*Noah Michel, 12*

## INSIDE THE WOODS

I love to explore inside the woods  
studded with small,  
small things to think of,  
and in majestic mountains,  
to fly my feasting eyes,  
and on ridges I root  
to find studded stones  
smothered in moss;  
fleeting, I find  
lakes like glistening eyes,  
lovely, staring lonely  
into the cyan skies.

*Joseph Rienstra, 12*

## AUTUMN

Autumn—  
fierce tiger,  
fire of colors,  
whirlwind of emotions,  
a girl walking  
through the woods,  
wind in her hair.  
Autumn—  
a sheet of music  
covered with  
a frenzy of dots,  
a beast cut loose  
now free.

*Stacie Greenhalgh, 15*

## MOUNTAIN LION

Through the broad distance  
of the mountainous forest  
the sleek beast drifts  
like a shadow,  
until it spots its prey.  
Its eyes become flames  
as it moves like soft music,  
hunting alone  
under the infinite  
expanse of the sky.

*Micah Ownbey, 13*

## THE DEER

I watched quietly as it crossed  
the lonely road and wandered  
into the meadow of flowers  
where thick grass grew wildly.  
One more appeared, then another.  
They walked, peacefully,  
drifting into the wind's music,  
then nestled down to dream  
in the silence of the flowered fields.

*Emily Bosen, 14*

## A STORY IN THE SNOW

My cat's eyes stare into the deep  
darkness as he walks along the path,  
his silky, gray  
fur shining in the winter coldness.  
Suddenly the sun shines  
radiantly on the pines,  
slowly rising,  
my cat continuing quietly,  
his gentle footsteps  
echoing his story  
in the fresh, white snow.

*Tia Austin, 13*

## SNOW HILL

The gentle wind  
hovers over our house  
in the small  
valley. Wolves are howling  
by the barn over  
the hill covered in snow.  
The sky is black  
as horses trot  
in the wordless  
night.

*Erik Roth, 12*

## NIGHT

Night swallows the sunlight  
and devours the day.  
It lingers across the plains  
cradling the moon and stars  
in its hands.

*Richie Browder, 8*

## NIGHT

Night,  
blackbird of forgiveness,  
mango of memory,  
pasturing on the sidewalk.  
A boy with wavy black hair  
is swimming through the waves of the sea.  
Night,  
glass of forgiveness  
falling and crashing on the floor.

*Nicholas Lopez, 9*

## ISLAND

Out of the water, the island  
rises like an animal, blinking  
the mist from its eyes in solitude.  
The crest of this icy  
mountain is the sail  
of a long-lost boat, wind-polished  
by breezes that have come  
and gone forever. Drifting  
on the sea, lost and frozen,  
haunted forever by voices  
that are not heard.

*Tiffani Barnhurst, 15*

## IN MY HANDS

In my hands  
there are edged rivers  
as still  
as the evening sun,  
weeping as they continue  
through this enormous journey  
through stone mountains.

*Christopher DeWeese, 10*

## MORE THAN A RIVER

Enjoying the river is the point.  
Gazing at the river,  
walking down the curving path,  
watching it glide right by  
like the tail of a kite  
moving back and forth  
in the sky.  
Trees sway near the river,  
birds sleep quietly,  
not a single sound until morning.  
The river is a friend.  
It talks to you  
in splashy ways.

*John Satini, 11*

## THE SILVER RIVER

Among the nightfall  
lies a silver river  
winding  
through the illusions  
of clouds.

You can hear its melody  
occasionally  
moving toward  
the nests of  
your imagination.

*Jason Lashua, 11*

## SKY POET

I am  
a sky poet  
writing poems  
in my house  
of clouds.  
The birds  
are carrying  
my poems  
in the misty clouds.

*Elisa Blackgoat, 12*

## A Note To Educators

Learning, an eclectic mix of what we bring to an experience and the consequential change and growth, is at the core of *A Crow Doesn't Need A Shadow*. This book, grounded in meaningful language-based learning theory, is an excellent resource for teaching language arts, enhancing science studies, and advocating ecological awareness. Guiding participants toward knowledge that is connected to their lives, it extends into the broader base of a child's education and promotes metacognition—learning about how we learn.

*A Crow Doesn't Need A Shadow* focuses on the integration of our inner and outer landscapes. Through nature field trips, children *and* adults are invited to reflect on their personal place in the world. The book develops an imaginative clarity in which we can feel our harmony with the rhythms of the earth.

Lorraine Ferra takes us on a lifetime field trip, and we have the opportunity to develop a reverence for nature and language in their entirety. This is not a book that tells us to *use* nature as inspiration for writing or as a jumping-off point to discover ourselves. It is a book about landscape and language, about looking, listening, touching, and talking. The author and the children's poems transport us, and, with or without field experience, we are there. Our visits to meadows, ponds, or our own yards are filled with enthusiasm for life which helps us absorb our environment, share our writing, and open our senses to new ways of thinking about our world.

There are many ways to use *A Crow Doesn't Need A Shadow*. It is a field guide to take outdoors and use in silence, listening while we allow the earth to feed our imaginations. It is a field guide to study and talk about, a handbook taking us *beyond* identification of what we discover, helping us understand the wholeness of our lives.

It is also a book to use indoors—at school, at home, on vacation. We can read a chapter, then go outside to search for pinecones or icicles and examine them, holding them in our palms, perceiving their uniqueness. When we begin to respond in writing, our words come out of the immediacy of these experiences.

We can also use this book to create our own personal field trips. Encouraged by our reading, our curiosity, our need to set out on our own, we can discover a pace, delight in a place.

Years of working with students as a poet-in-residence have given Lorraine Ferra an unusual ability to help us expand our awareness. The poems in the chapters and those included in the anthology are extraordinary. When Nicholas Lopez says night is a "blackbird of forgiveness," we see it. When Melissa Marsh says, "I gaze hungrily at the sky, feeding myself with the clouds," we know it can happen. The unmistakable call of the quail, the feathered remnants of a wren's nest, the first flight of a fledgling robin are all ways we can discover our own voices, our own homes, and our own new journeys.

I have long awaited the publication of this book. It can be shared by adults and children. Take it outdoors and listen.

*Mona Hirschi Daniels, Ph.D.*

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Hunter College, New York City

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Lorraine Ferra  
Port Townsend, Washington  
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### Author Presentations

Lorraine Ferra works with the Poets-in-Residence programs of several states.

She also gives presentations and workshops on the uses and adaptations of this book.

If you would be interested in arranging a workshop presentation or a residency, please contact the publisher or write to the author at  
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